

# Study Group - “Liberation *in the Palm of Your Hand*”

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Samdup Tsering

འདྲེན་ལམ་དེ་མ་རྣམས་གྲོལ་ལམ་གྱི་འཕགས་པ་བཅུ་དཔལ།



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Fully withdrawing your mind inward you should generate the mind of bodhicitta, which is thinking that the reason we study the stages of the path to enlightenment is to attain the state of Buddhahood, so as to be able to benefit all beings.

## 422.221.133: Third Cause of Delusions: Bad Company or Bad Friends

འདྲེན་ལམ་།

Of the six causes of generating delusions we have finished the first two. We now discuss the third, bad company or bad friends.

This cause brings distraction into our mind, and what we shall learn here is not to be influenced by bad or evil friends.

You must choose friends who are suitable to the development of your virtue and all positive qualities. Whether you are a spiritual practitioner or not, you have to be very careful in making friends with others. For no matter who we accompany, he or she will have two aspects to their character in both their attitudes and deeds, a positive side and a negative side.

If, as a spiritual practitioner, we choose someone who has faith in dharma, who practises dharma, and who inspires us to develop wholesome qualities, then we can also develop many similar qualities through the influence of that friend.

Even if you are not practising any spiritual teachings it is important to know how to sustain your friendship with others. You should see that your friend has both negative and positive qualities. If you pick up some negative conduct from your friend then you will regret it later, as you do not want any negative factors in your life. The most important thing in maintaining a friendship is to always try to learn from the good sides of your friend, whilst as much as possible trying to maintain distance from the bad side. Then it does not matter who is your friend since you will not be totally influenced by them.

Padampa Sangay, the great Tibetan lama, said in his advice to the people of his region

“If you follow everything you see in the ill-friend then naturally you will acquire all negative aspects of that friend. So you should abandon such a friend.

If you follow a good friend then you will automatically acquire all the qualities of that friend. So always rely upon virtuous friends.”

If you befriend an ill-friend, then from that friendship

you develop more negative qualities and non-virtues. Whereas accompanying a virtuous or good friend will inspire you to increase your positive qualities.

One of the major causes of generating delusions in our mind is the influence of other people over us. If we are not careful then through such influence we can lose all our good qualities of actions of body speech and mind. What we need to do, is to try not to be influenced with the deeds of an evil or ill-friend. If we do not follow the ill-conduct of others, then their actions cannot influence us.

If we think of ourselves, we see how quickly we become influenced by others, and respond to them in the same way. If someone frowns at us, and shows an angry face then we respond in the same way. With a close friend or in a family situation we do the same thing. If one partner becomes cross then the other cannot tolerate that, and also gets cross. It is the same between parents and children. Instead of trying to alleviate problems, and help those who are close to us to solve their problems, we bring more conflict and problems into their life.

We must understand that in reality nobody is perfect; there is no boyfriend or girlfriend, no parent and no child who never gets angry. If we live with a friend who has bad habits and is short tempered, it is so easy to respond in a similar way. Then we shall also develop a bad temper, and on meeting a very old friend they will say “You have changed.” Maybe you were once very patient, but you are now ill-tempered. They might even know that the reason why you have changed is because of living with that ill-tempered friend. There are so many examples of how the outside world can influence you, and bring more problems into your mind, for example, by conditioning delusions in your mind so that they will arise more easily.

So it is important to investigate life events, and try to see what is wrong in those events, and the cause of those wrongs. What is wrong is our view of the cause of happiness, which we believe is to have more indulgence in life, such as reading<sup>1</sup> and gossiping. This stimulates desire and other delusions in our mind.

Happiness is seen as arising from doing all sorts of different things in life, which cost us time, effort and money. All these things, which are supposed to be the means to be happy in life, have become a source of confusion and unhappiness. As we grow older, we then realise that what we have done does not provide any

<sup>1</sup> Editor: This probably means reading material lacking any purpose or merit.

stability or clear direction at all.

Although the heading is “bad company” the cause which we are actually describing is the various objects which bring distraction in our mind, and are a source of generating delusions.

### **Choosing Friends**

In talking about friendship we have to consider the best attitude to adopt when finding a friend, and then the best way to maintain that friendship. This is important since whoever you choose as your friend will have some influence over your life.

Geshe-la always advises “Do not just look at their face. Look deeply into them.” If you are trying to establish a lifelong friend it is important to see that you share interests, as well as looking at their nature. Also look at their qualifications for making a living, because material conditions are very important to security and comfort of our life. Realistically those material conditions are not totally determined by the karma of past lives, but also on creating or meeting with those conditions in this life. So we must look at our friend’s capacity to earn a livelihood.

From your own side, just because you decide to live with someone in a close relationship does not mean that you will need to change your whole life, your whole view and all your interests. You do not know how long your friendship will last. It does not matter with whom we live or do not live, our life goes on. But what does matter is the worthy qualities we have already achieved in life, and those that we shall achieve in future. Therefore when meeting with a friend it is important that we safeguard those worthy qualities in our life, and see the friendship as a way of increasing those worthy qualities.

Whoever we meet as a friend will have a negative and a positive side. We should try not to be influenced by the negative sides, but try to emulate the positive ones. Then the outcome will be very fruitful for you, whether the relationship lasts for a whole lifetime or not.

One’s attitude in choosing a friend should not be like a dog who goes after any meat thrown at it.

If we maintain our friendships skilfully there are always benefits. On the other hand if you are not skilful it becomes a cause of more problems, both for yourself and others.

If we apply this to our practice then we can divide our friends into two: inner and the outer friends. The inner good friend refers to our own virtuous actions of body, speech and mind. This is a friend who we admire and will abide by us, and who can produce happiness in our life. The inner ill-friend refers to our non-virtuous actions of body, speech and mind. These actions are the enemies who destroy all the goodness, happiness, peace and virtue in life.

If we focus on outside friends, there are people who influence you in terms of increasing negative unskillful actions. Do not listen to such evil or ill-friends and instead avoid them. Whereas people who influence you to increase virtuous qualities of body, speech and mind, are good friends. We should see them as a source of inspiration to develop our virtuous qualities.

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**Headings with outline numbering are derived from the Text. Headings without outline numbering are derived from Geshe Doga’s commentary.**

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### ***Edit methodology***

*The initial transcript is prepared from Alan Molloy’s notes. These are checked with Damien Busby’s notes by Alan Molloy and any differences noted.*

*Adair Bunnnett then compares her notes against the typed transcript and prepares this edited version.*

*Edited version checked by Alan Molloy*

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